

Story 2072 (Transcribed from his field tape by Ahmet Ali Arslan and used later in his unpublished dissertation.)

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Location: Güvencak vil-
lage, Çıldır
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Province

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Disposing of the Corpses of Three Drowned Men

A man and his very pretty wife once lived in a small village. The muhtar¹ and the hoca² of that village were interested in that woman, and so was a mullah³ who lived there. She grew annoyed that these three men continued to pursue her. One day she prayed, "O Allah, help me! What should I do to get rid of these three admirers?" She finally decided that the best thing she could do would be to reveal the whole matter to her husband

Her husband listened to her account and then said "Let us make a trap for these three men." They dug a hole in the garden behind their house and filled that

¹The headman of a Turkish village. He may be the only elected official that some villagers ever see, for most other authorities in their area are appointees of one or another of the federal ministries.

²The village preacher and religious leader. In pre-Republican times the hoca was also the local teacher, for education was then the responsibility of the clergy. Although teachers now have a secular education, both they and professors are still occasionally called hoca.

³An authority on Islamic law.

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hole with water. They then covered the hole with a mat made of woven grass. The husband then said, "Wife, make an appointment with each of those men half an hour apart. Invite one to come at 9 o'clock tonight, one to come at 9:30, and the third one at 10 o'clock. I shall arrive back here at 10:30

The next day when she saw the mullah, he asked, "What is the matter? I asked you a question several days ago, but you still have not given me an answer."

"I didn't have an opportunity to respond to you. My husband has just left the village. Come to my house at 9 o'clock tonight.

While she was at the marketplace, she saw the hoca, who asked her, "Well, what answer do you have for me? You have not given me any information at all."

"That was because I did not have any opportunity to do so. But, if you wish, you may come to my house at 9:30 tonight."

"I shall be there at that time," said the hoca

Later she saw the muhtar on the street. He said, "Lady, I made a proposal to you the other day, but you have not given me any answer to that proposal. What do

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you have to say about it?"

She answered, "Come to my house at 10 o'clock night. My husband will not be at home, and we can do anything that you wish." Pleased with this response, the muhtar left and began waiting for 10 o'clock to come.

At 9 o'clock the mullah arrived. After she had opened the door and admitted this guest, she began to cook some food for him. He said, "Don't bother to cook anything for me. Just come here and sit by me. We can talk and have a good time."

"No," she answered. "We cannot really have a time when we are hungry. Let us have some food first, and then we can do whatever you want to do." Her purpose was to allow some time to elapse.

While she was cooking, there was a knock on the front door. "Who is that?" asked the mullah.

"It must be that my husband has returned," she answered.

"What should I do now?" he asked.

"Come Let me hide you," she said. Opening the back door, she pointed across the garden and said, "Hide in that shed over there. After my husband has fallen asleep,

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I shall come and get you." The mullah started toward shed, but on the way he fell into the trap and drowned.

Reentering the house, the woman opened the front door for the hoca. She showed him a place to sit and returned to her cooking. "What are you doing?" asked hoca. "Come here and let us enjoy each other."

"No," she said. "We can have a better time together after we have eaten something." Again, she was simply wasting time until the next guest arrived.

She continued to delay in this way until 10 o'clock. At that time there was another knock on the front door. "Who is that at the door?" asked the hoca.

"It may be that my husband has returned," she said.

"What should I do now?" asked the hoca.

"Come with me so that I can hide you. After my husband has fallen asleep, I shall come and get you." She then showed him out the back door and pointed to the shed across the garden. The hoca started to the shed, but he too fell into the trap and drowned.

Closing the back door, the woman went to the front door and let in the muhtar. After leading him to a place where he could sit, she went on with her cooking. The

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muhtar said, "Come here to me so that we can enjoy ourselves

"Let me cook a little food now so that we can first eat dinner together." She worked slowly in order to use up all of the time between 10 o'clock and 10:30.

When there was a knock on the door at 10:30, the muhtar said, "Alas! Who is that?"

"I do not know, but it may be that my husband has returned earlier than I had expected."

"In that case, what should I do?"

"I shall show you a place to hide for a short while. After my husband has fallen asleep, I shall return for you." Taking him out the back door, she pointed across the garden and said, "Hide in that shed." Like the mullah and the hoca, the muhtar fell into the trap and drowned.

When the husband entered the house, he asked, "Well, what happened, my wife?"

"I followed your directions exactly, and all three of those men fell into the trap and drowned. Their dead bodies are still in that hole in our garden."

"Good But what shall we do now, wife?"

"It is up to you. We shall do whatever you say."

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"Don't worry, wife." They got a pole and placed a hook on the end of it. With this tool, they pulled from the trap the body of one of the drowned men and laid it out in the center of the main room of their house. "Now let me go and ask my godfather, Hasan, to help us out of this difficulty. He will be able to take this body someplace where it will not be found."

When he went and knocked on the door of Godfather Hasan, that good man opened the door and said, "Oh-h-h, welcome! What brings you here, Godson? What is the matter?"

"Oh, Godfather, I am in trouble."

"What is the matter?"

"Come with me, and I shall tell you about it at my home

When they reached the godchild's home, Godfather Hasan saw at once that there was a corpse lying on the floor. "What is this?" he asked.

The husband said, "This man came to our home as a guest. He had a sudden griping pain, and then after a short while, he died. Now I do not know what to do with his body. What should I do?"

Hasan said, "Don't worry, Godson. I am here to help

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you. I can hide this corpse so completely that not even a jinn⁴ will be able to find it." He then arose, grabbed the body, and put it on his shoulder. After leaving the house of his godson, Hasan went to the river and threw the corpse into the swirling waters

As soon as Hasan had left his godson's house with his load, the husband and wife pulled another body from the trap and placed it at the same spot in their house where the first corpse had been lying. When Hasan saw it, he was amazed. He said, "What is this? I threw this corpse into the middle of the river. How did he get back here again?"

The husband answered, "I don't know, but he arrived back here shortly before you did."

Godfather Haso sic grew angry at the corpse. He said to the husband and wife, "You will see in what an obscure place I shall leave him this time!" This Hasan knew every meter of the nearby mountain, for he had been

⁴The word jinn suggests two very different kinds of supernatural creatures. The first is the huge otherworldly being who comes out of a vase or jar or appears in response to some signal, such as the rubbing of a magic lamp or ring. This creature then proceeds to give the caller aid in achieving what he wishes. The other kind of jinn is never seen. It is a spiritual force referred to in some Sufi beliefs and in other mystical systems.

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a shepherd since boyhood, and he had spent years in the pastures on its slopes. He put the corpse on his shoulder and left. He took the corpse to a cave where dragons had lived. After Hasan had placed the dead man deep in that cave, he rolled a boulder against the mouth of that cave.

While the godfather was away, the husband and wife pulled the last body from the trap and placed it in the house at exactly the same spot where the first two corpses

lain. When Hasan returned and saw what he thought was the same corpse, he said, "What is this? I hid this fellow in a very secure place. How could he have come back here?"

"Where did you take him?" asked the godson. "How was he able to get back here?"

After explaining how he had left the corpse in a cave, he said, "This time I shall make it impossible for

to return!" Placing the corpse on his shoulder, the godfather took it to a bridge over the river. There was a wide and deep current of water that flowed beneath that bridge. It was almost morning now, and the time for the first prayer service of the day was approaching. At the

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edge of the river beneath the bridge there was an old taking the ritual ablutions that always precede a prayer service. When the corpse struck the water with a loud splat, the sound frightened the old man, who began running away without even buttoning his clothes or putting on shoes.

Haso then saw the old man for the first time. He said, "Are you running again? I threw you from the riverbank into the water, but you came ashore and ran from there I put you in a mountain cave, but you ran from there too I threw you into the river from the height of this bridge, and now you are again running away." He then caught the old man, carried him up onto the bridge, and threw him into the river from there. He then waited and watched surface of the river to see if anyone came forth from it and tried to run away. When no one climbed out of the water, Haso returned to the home of his godson. He was relieved to see that the corpse had not returned this time.

His godson said to him, "May Allah bless you You have done very well, for now that corpse has stopped coming back here."

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Haso said, "Say nothing about it. I took the corpse and threw it into the river from the bridge. I saw him come out of the water and begin to run away, but I caught him and threw him back into the river, and this time he stayed in the river. We finally got rid of that corpse."

After Haso had left, the husband said to his wife, "We thought that there were three dead men, but apparently Godfather Hasan has killed a fourth."

The story ends here. May Allah give long life to both the narrator and the listener.